

DOE NEWS

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Secretary Abraham Reaffirms the Departments of Energy's Government-to-Government Relations with American Indian Tribal Governments

Names Victoria Thornton Director of Indian Affairs

WASHINGTON, DC – Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham reaffirmed yesterday the Department of Energy's (DOE) commitment to meeting its responsibilities in the government-to-government relationships between federally recognized American Indian tribes and the Department.

"In the past few months many tribal leaders have come to offer their assistance regarding our mutual energy concerns," said Secretary Abraham. "We must include tribal participation in the decision-making process where our action may impact their environmental and cultural interests."

In a memorandum to all DOE departments, he reaffirmed the American Indian and Alaska native Tribal Government Policy, which outlines the principles to be followed by the Department in its interaction with tribes. The Secretary directed his staff to be responsive to the Department's American Indian Policy, develop implementation plans, and ensure that all employees are fully aware of the intent of this Policy.

Secretary Abraham also named Victoria Thornton as Director of Indian Affairs, Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs. Ms. Thornton will serve as the principal liaison and advisor for tribal governments, American Indian organizations and associations regarding Departmental American Indian issues and activities.

"Victoria's many years of public service at the federal, state and local levels, as well as her experience here at the Department, will assist us as we continue to implement the Department's American Indian and Alaska Native Policy," said Secretary Abraham. "Her thorough understanding of diverse cultures and issues is an asset to our team."

As Director of Indian Affairs, Ms. Thornton will establish and maintain Headquarters and Field Organizations Indian Issues points of Contact (POC), including Operations Offices, National Laboratories and Power Marketing Administrations. Each Indian Issues POC serves as the liaison between their respective program offices and tribal governments in fostering government-to-government relationships.

Ms. Thornton served in the former Bush Administration as Admiral Watkins Director of Scheduling and Logistics and during the Reagan Administration as a staff member of the Presidential Commission on Indian Reservation Economics and the Presidential Commission on the HIV Epidemic. She is part Diegueno of the San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians, Valley Center, California, where her father served almost twenty years as Tribal Chairman. Ms. Thornton has a bachelor of science degree from the California State University at Fullerton and teaching credentials from the University of California at Irvine.

For copies of the Department's American Indian policy, please go to www.ci.doe.gov, click on Indian Affairs, click on Indian Policy, or contact the Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs at (202) 586-5499.